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THOUGHTS

ON

NON - RESIDENCE,

TITHES, INCLOSURES,

RARE LANDLORDS, RICH TENANTS,

REGIMENTAL CHAPLAINS,

&c. &c. &c.

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BY THE AUTHOR.  
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RESIDENCE

TITLES - INCLOSURES

THE LANDLORDS, EACH TENANT

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THE best things are generally liable to the greatest abuse. The Law, framed for the protection of property, and the support of civil society, is often made subservient to the worst purposes, becomes the pest of social confidence, and the worst engine of oppression. So fares it with Religion too ; which, with the clearest and best interests of this world, involves also those of the next : it strengthens and adorns the various relations of life ; and in a degree celestializes the human mind. Look, on the other hand, to the ravages and devastation, to the cruelties, massacres, and murders it has occasioned ; to the numerous bad purposes, to which it has been abused ; and

you see its angel form blurred and blotted with various foul humours, and distorted with deformity.

The necessity of a religious establishment hath been generally supposed. America hath disputed it; and made an experiment, whether religion may not subsist without it. It is too early yet, from the success of the attempt in that country, to form a determination on the question. Religion I have ever considered as a cement of civil government: but without an establishment, that quality is lost. Religious opinions clashing with each other, each supported by zeal and interest against the other, appear to me more calculated to divide a people, than cement them. Nor is the purity of the religion itself so likely to be preserved, when frittered into different modes of worship, each alike unprotected, as when countenanced by the favour of civil authority; each mutually supporting, as supported by, the other.

But, however prepossessed myself in favour of a religious establishment, I am not so

partial an observer, as not to see many subjects of complaint in the conduct and management of those, that have been esteemed the purest and the best. To an absolute equality, in the dignity and value of preferments, there are many just objections: to a too great disparity in them perhaps still more numerous and greater. When the dignities and emoluments of the Church become prostituted, which, when they are very great, they always will be, in being conferred on ignorant, illiterate, and worthless individuals, while learning and merit are suffered to be their own reward; such a distribution of preferments reflects a shade on the Establishment, which affects even Religion itself. But let those who may abuse the patronage, the Constitution shall have vested in them, to the base prostitution of great preferments to fawning sycophants, or to the infamous purposes of barter, look to the future hour of retribution, and patient merit to that of reward; my present subject is with neither of them.

There is among the Established Clergy of this country a very large description of men, who have it in their power to be the very best members of society, or the worst; the best, by a proper discharge of their duty; the worst, by a neglect of it. The characters to whom I allude, are the large body of parish priests; the rectors, and vicars. I enter not into the account of their abilities, or their want of them; into their learning, or their illiterature. They must be very deficient indeed in either of those points, to be incapable of discharging the duties of a parish priest: as a very moderate share of each will place the clergyman above the farmer or mechanic, enable him to appear to them in a superior light, and qualified to afford them instruction. If he be not equal to such a charge:—But I retract the supposition; I can conceive no man capable of obtaining orders, who is not in learning and abilities qualified for the duties of a parochial priest.

All I require, in my present consideration of the clerical character, is, a little learn-

ing, common abilities, and a decent character. I require not a saint, and I do not suppose a notorious sinner; and surely I am not fastidious in my requisitions. Yet, possessed of these moderate qualifications, I know not so respectable a character as that of a resident parish priest, nor so useful an one. His parishioners are his children, his neighbours are his friends, the poor look up to him, the rich respect him, he is with his five talents the faithful servant of his God; and the state at large profits by his labours. I will venture to say, the community is so advantaged by it, that, if a general residence of the parochial clergy could be effected, the consequences would soon become visible in an amelioration of manners throughout the country; we should see more of order every where prevail; we should see something of the spirit of religion, where we now scarcely see the form of it.

And here a wide field offers to me, to expatiate on the many satisfactions that attend the life of a good parish priest: in the course of which, his gratifications are

heightened by the pleasing reflection, that he has in future nothing to fear, and every thing to hope. But it is not the design of these pages to reconcile the life of a country clergyman to himself; so much as to evince the utility of it to the public. It advantages every individual: and what advantages every individual, in the aggregate advantages the whole. In wants, the poor parishioner flies to his rector for such assistance as his situation enables him to give: under afflictions, he flies to him for comfort: in difficulties and embarrassments, he hath in him a faithful counsellor; in doubts, he finds in him a guide and director; on every occasion, he has the satisfaction of knowing he has a friend at hand.

In a parish so guarded, Tom Pain and all his superficialities will find no entrance: or if, by dint of assiduity in the champions of infidelity, he should find his way there; it is a comfortable reflection, that he will do no more harm than an old almanack. The personal attention of a clergyman, of such description as I have supposed, to his

flock, attaches them to him; the sanctity of his character to such attachment gives additional weight; and his advice, his caution, his opinion, so supported, acquire the force of conviction. Here is no complaints of the disturbance of methodists and schismatics. The people know but one road to heaven; which is that, their good rector points out to them every Sunday; and preaches to them all the rest of the week by that most forceful of sermons, a good example. He feels a property in them, in their best part, their souls; the people acknowledge it; they call him *THEIR* rector; and they learn under such an influence to think as he thinks, to act as he does, and to copy him as an example and pattern of life.

Methinks I see the good man taking his evening walk; now calling in upon his humble, now on his more opulent neighbours; adapting his discourse to their respective situations; and leaving both in good humour with themselves, and pleasurable sensations produced in the mind lifted up by condescending goodness to a level of

friendly intercourse with him, whom they love and respect as their conductor and guide through this world to a better. Regularity and decency reign in general through a parish, the spiritual concerns of which are so administered : and, if a village orator, as is sometimes the case, endeavour to lead the rest awry ; the rector is at hand, and the influence of his character and his knowledge aiding each other, he will gain an easy victory, and ward off the mischief that might otherwise be widely diffused.

To a man, whose heart is warm in the sacred cause of religion, which at a day like this so alarmingly languishes, the picture I have drawn must be a pleasing, and to my own knowledge it is not a singular one ; and we want not superiors in the Church, whose zeal would animate them to remunerate such an original. But the misfortune is, merit is too apt to veil its head in the shades of obscurity : and, however excellent may be the prelate's heart ; his eye, we know, is human, and cannot pervade the corner of every deep recess ; and hence we are apt unjustly to exclaim

at the neglect of patient merit, and the partialities of supercilious power. But I am not writing a panegyric: I am sure, I shall not be accused of it: the object of these pages is of a very different tendency. Yet at the same time, in regard to the other extreme, with the candid, I trust from censure I shall pass equally free. I write not to expose, but to reform: nor is there a character in the following pages, of which I could not produce the original.

Of the great neglect of the duty I am pressing on the Clergy, and of the high importance of it, none are more sensible than the Bishops themselves. The utility, the necessity of parochial residence, is the burden of every charge from Canterbury to Llandaff. But I know not how it happens; it generally proves a recommendation *pro forma*, and passes off like a visitation dinner. The truth is, modern Bishops have not that weight and influence with their Clergy they ought to have, and which might be expected: pity it is not otherwise: and it is almost an inexplicable difficulty to point out a reason,

why they have not. There have been times, when Prelates considered their preferments (like the oaks on their estates) as their own absolute and real property, and laid living upon living, dignity upon dignity, on the asinine * shoulders of their own relations; who, bending under the accumulated burthens, were almost ready to cry out, “*Ohe!*” while, notwithstanding the sollicitations of conscience, they had not a heart to do it; but still continued to stick close to a father’s, and uncle’s, or good cousin’s ribs, till “*plena cruoris hirudo.*”

—Not such the prelates of the present day: sweet peace of mind be theirs: who have been known to dissipate the clouds with which adversity sometimes obscures the brightest rays of genius, and to call modest merit from the shades of obscurity! And may the tribute of fair fame perpetuate his memory, who could lay his hand upon his breast, and say, he never felt himself more embarrassed, than, when his preferments became vacant, to discover how to dispose of them in the manner that might

* See a ludicrous print, *The Ass loaded with Preferment*, —which alluded to a certain dean not of the present day.

be most acceptable to the Divine Being who committed them to his trust *!

But this by way of digression.—Now let us return to our subject of parochial residence. We have already seen the good effects of it in the parish above described: which, though a rare sight, I can assure the reader was a real description; and which, but for certain reasons, I would not hesitate to point out. Let my courteous reader carry the impression of it on his mind; while I present him with a different prospect. There are two or three villages in a range,—they are in my mind's eye, and I will suppose my reader at my elbow, while I point them out to him. And first let me advert to Claypole; the rector of which lives at a village about twelve miles off, where there are four parishes in a circle; and as, in speed of reading, he will distance the reader of the temple, and outstrip a minor Canon of St. Pauls; he can serve the four churches in a day, and make nothing of it: and thereby, after

* See Bishop Porteus's Life of Archbishop Secker.

paying his own curate, he puts not less than 40l. a year in his pocket.

The vicar of the next church, which raises its spiring top between the two hills, is Mr. Giles. No man knows the value of a bullock better than he does; or tastes with greedier eye the brown beauties of a field of corn. He has a resident curate on his vicarage, and keeps a maid servant in the vicarage house, where he sleeps once in a fortnight or three weeks, by way of keeping residence. I wish he would keep a *man*, rather than a *maid* servant there; for it is a subject, on which the girls giggle and laugh, and every one we know is ready to "pick a hole in a clergyman's coat." The doctor however, has always passed for a very pious man; though he likes a farm yard better than a church-yard. And by this manoeuvre, he conceives that he keeps residence, and cheats the devil: and he also keeps, what he thinks a much better thing than residence, a good farm in his hands. He is enabled by plenty of money to manage it well; and all the farmers round give brother Giles the nickname, taken from the well-known sign on

Bagshot Heath, of the GOLDEN FARMER. Farmer Giles however acts with much more propriety than his neighbour, farmer Hubblebub; who does not even keep up the mummary of residence by keeping in the house a *filie de Chambre*.

The church you see in the valley with a few straggling houses round it, and the parsonage adjoining in a lamentable state of dilapidation, boasts an opulent rector: who, having an estate at a little distance from it, and on that estate an elegant mansion house, has left his mouldering parsonage to the residence of his curate, with a wife and seven starved children; whose poverty exhibits itself in the wretched appearance of his habitation. As to the doctor, he troubles himself little about it, or about the acres, which in a slovenly unfenced state surround it. The charming idea of property endears to him his own house and acres; these engross his attention: while he regards with inattention and indifference those possessions, which his death at farthest must separate from his family; or new promotion, that through the

interest of a certain great man, who is every seventh year his humble servant for his vote and interest at a parliamentary election, he every day expects, may move him a little higher, and a little sooner than his last and grand promotion ; which, however serious and solemn, seems least to engage his attention.

Take my glass, and you may very clearly distinguish the church, and parsonage house adjoining to it, the last of the range of villages I pointed out to you. The church you observe has a pleasing, though antique appearance. Its ivy-mantled walls I like ; but the old diamond-cut and broken windows shew that the parson does not pay it quite so much attention, as he does his parsonage house, which, as you see, is in good preservation ; and though on a large scale, I assure you is not more than proportionate to the value of the living. The rector resides there a full month in the year. You have heard, I make no doubt, of Ansty's Bob Jerome ; the rector of that parish is the very man. He resides, as I told you, a whole month in

the year; and that month is September. I mean, it was September; but the last Act of Parliament respecting partridge shooting has a little altered Bob's time of residence, which entirely depends on the shooting season. And Bob, till the Legislature shall think fit again to alter that season, very regularly enters on his parochial duty about the middle of September; and about the middle of the next month, that is, as soon as he has collected his Michaelmas tithes, as regularly leaves it. The farmers, it is the object of these pages to shew, do not do well without a rector: but it must be ingenuously owned, that Bob's farmers do not much better with one. For, in the first place, he comes, as it were with a writ of inquiry into the value of their industry, the product of their crops, and the increase of their cattle: and in the next, Bob's fundays are chiefly occupied in riding over their corn fields, and plats of turnips, with a brace or two of pointers at his horse's tail; in quest of coveys, the slaughter of which is to form the business of the remaining six days of the week.

Why so good a house, so valuable a living, so pleasant a spot, should not have charms to engage a rector's longer residence, if the reader should be solicitous to know, a sketch of Mr. Jerome's character will satisfy him. Bob is a fine, lively, sprightly fellow; his studies have been more employed on the works of Heber and Hoyle, than of his namesake Jerome; his pleasures are the board of green cloth, and the chace, chequered at the tithing season with a single month of gunnery. During the other eleven months of the year, Bob drives with the tide. In the seasons at Bath, both the card and billiard table, as well as the ball room, would be sensible of a chasm, if he were not there. His winters he spends in town; in the morning never fails, if the morning be fine, to curvette it in Hyde Park; on his tavern dinner he expends a curate's common subsistence of a week; on his evening regale, I will not attend him to it, but I should guess a great deal more. In the summer, when the town begins to clear, Bob in London, like the clerk of his parish in church, is the last that quits it. He then swills perhaps with my Lord

his uncle for a month on venison; and from one watering place to another, contrives to dash through the remainder of the summer. In the meantime what becomes of Mr. Jerome's parish?—in general, pretty much the same as becomes of the three other parishes in the range, to which I pointed. The people despise their parson, neglect their church, some become drunkards, some atheists, others attend the methodist meetings, others warm their zeal in the cold baptistery of the anabaptist, and all acquire a growing aversion to the established church.

But, it may be said, all curates are not alike: and it is granted. But as to the grand business of doing good in their respective parishes, all curates are pretty much of a speed; with an exception that now and then happens of a conscientious methodist, who, undertaking to do the duty at an inferior price, steals a march into the parish, and by indefatigable industry in some measure counterbalances his want of influence. But as soon as that is found out, the whole rookery about him are on

the wing ; nor ever cease their croakings, till they have so stunned the ears of their diocesan, with the regard due "to the peace of the church," that, for his own peace, he finds himself reluctantly obliged to dismiss from his diocese a man, who fills his church with strays from other parishes by a constant and earnest attention to his duty, perhaps too by the irregularity of preaching without notes, and explaining scripture truths in a manner that may be best understood by those whom it concerns to understand them. And those cases are almost too few to create the exception I premised to a general rule ; by which, as far as my observation has led me, curates I am inclined to think may be compendiously divided into two classes ; the buck parson in *his Leathers*, as is the humorous term among them ; and old Welchman's yarn-stockinged tribe, "*Liberis magis, quam libris auctos.*"

The class of buck parsons generally consists of idle dissipated fellows of colleges, those pests of academic discipline, and disgrace of opulent foundations ; who carry

into the country all the vices of the university; and do harm in a similar manner but in a much greater degree, with the poor militia soldiers, who, on their return to their respective parishes, import all the vices of the camp. Of this class is Mr. Scutt, so nicknamed by the more serious part of the vicinity from his custom of wearing his hair rolled up behind in a single small curl, resembling nothing so much as the tail of a bucking rabbit. But the young parson, apprised of his name, and feeling the ridicule of it, has been lately cropped: the name however still lives, and with the name "*hæret arundo*." Mr. Scutt, is fellow of——College, and was in the university the intimate friend of Mr. Jerome; their studies were the same, so were their pleasures and their associates. Their inclinations are still the same, but Jerome has it in his power, as we have seen, to give full scope to his; while Scutt is contented to pursue his own in a more contracted sphere. His friend Jerome compliments him with the use of a hunter; which admits him occasionally to the tables of all the squires, squirets, and squirts

in the country. And, what renders him still more welcome there, he was member of the catch club in the university, and can roar an admirable catch or glee. He drinks, and smiles, and laughs, and dances, he is the *bon vivant* of the men, and the humble servant of the ladies. He is every where at home, but no where more so than at Mr. Mushroom's. This gentleman ranks in the third class, in which I ranged rural opulence, that of the squirts. He is a considerable tenant of Mr. Hawthorn, who with, an eye to the representation of the county, and emulous of the title of a RARE landlord, by letting his estates at half their value, creates the swarm of miscreants, who are the great monopolisers of corn, and tyrants of the village; the rich and purse-proud farmers. Mrs. Mushroom, who makes no more butter, who breeds no more fowls than is necessary for the consumption of her own family, has nothing to do with the dairy, and with a row of close elms blocks from her view the sight, as she hath long erased from her mind the ideas, of a farm-yard. Reading is her pride, and novels her delight. For

music too she has a taste : which Miss, who is just returned from the boarding school, and there learned to thrum a tune on the harpsichord, every day improves. There Mr. Scutt is always an acceptable guest; there he is in a manner domesticated. The squirt has always a brace of good hunters in the stables ; and on the days, that Lord Nimrod's hounds are out, Mr. Scutt seldom fails to call on and attend Mr. Mushroom to the field. The labours of the day are always compensated with a good dinner : after which Miss Mushroom tinkles a tune, Mr. Scutt with his vocal pipe accompanies it, and Mrs. Mushroom languishes at the melting notes ; till the squirt tired and drunk, and Miss, sleepy and squeamish, move off to bed ; and the evening concludes in a game at—piquet, between Mrs. Mushroom and Mr. Scutt.

Pity, that with all the musical talents of Mr. Scutt, the psalmody of his Church should be so much neglected ! But it shortens the service, to have no singing : and the shorter the service the better, thinks Mr. Scutt. He has persuaded the head

farmer's daughter, that it is so. And he boasts that he does not despair 'ere long of convincing her, that preaching and praying are as unnecessary as singing; and as Miss Barleymow gives the cast to the parish, he expects soon to make as thorough a sinecure of the curacy, as Mr. Jerome makes of the living. I must however observe, in justice to Mr. Scutt, that he says this in jest; just as his friend Jerome did, when met by a neighbour with his dogs at his tail in service-time, he observed "that grocers never love plumbs."—But those and such like ludicrous expressions, however inoffensively intended, the reverend clerics will permit me to say, have with the common people a very different effect from what their wit and humour might suspect; *hic nugæ in seria ducunt.*

I am free to own, it is not necessary that every curate of a parish should be a fellow of a college: but, upon inquiry, let us try whether the religious state of a parish be much promoted by one of a different character. Mr. Yarnstockings is a very good kind of man, as the sequel of

his conduct will evince: but he was a hireling and poor, and therefore wanted influence and respect. It was also known by his parishioners, that, as such, whenever he could obtain a better curacy, he would leave them: and of course he could not possess that confidential regard, which should always subsist between a pastor and his flock; and which between the curate of a parish and his parishioners never can do.

The saving knowledge of Mr. Doublechin, for that was the rector's name, had contrived formerly to have the parish of Dovedale served by a neighbouring clergyman for 30*l.* a year: but as the improvements in agriculture had doubled the value of the living since he was first instituted to it, and an ugly Act of Parliament called more loudly on him for an increase of stipend, he made a virtue of necessity, and a boast of paying a resident curate 50*l.* per annum, out of a living that did not produce more than 700*l.* How Mr. Doublechin, with his moderate pretensions of character, wormed himself into a living of that

magnitude, is, gentle reader, a matter of no concern either to you or me. There are many ways of getting preferment, and some very bye ones. In the present instance, Mr. Doublechin has a living of 700*l.* a year, and Mr. Yarnstockings a curacy of 50*l.* Both are satisfied, and so far all is well. With the private characters of those gentlemen we have nothing to do, I will therefore only observe of Mr. Yarnstockings, that he had a good school-education, and was ordained by a Welch Bishop, as one who might *do well enough* for a Welch curacy; that he himself afterwards thought he might do well enough for an English one, and as 50*l.* a year, are better than 15, he left the barren mountains of Wales for the more fertile vales of England. And now let us look into the state of Religion, for that is our concern in the parish of Dove-dale, under the auspices of Mr. Doublechin, and the conduct of his worthy curate: for Mr. Yarnstockings, as far as his abilities and his learning went, was a very worthy character.

There was nothing particular in the

condition of the parish. The great farmers were rich and proud, the little farmers selfish and sordid, the labourers oppressed and poor. Mr. Doublechin saw them once a year, when he gave his parishioners a dinner, and received his tithes. Mr. Yarnstockings's abilities were not of the first size; his learning was rather circumscribed, and it may be reasonably conceived, out of an income of 50*l.* a year he had not much money, wherewith to aid it by the purchase of books. Mr. Doublechin, who was no sooner instituted to the living, than he deserted it, and visited his flock once a year, not to instruct, but to fleece them, was their object of detestation. The reasoning of the parishioners, (handed down from an illumined farrier, the bell-wether of the parish, which run like lightning through every degree, from him who paid tithes to him who thrashed in the barn,) was, that if attendance on the Church claimed as a duty on any, it claimed principally and especially on the rector, who drew from it an ample revenue: but he had deserted it: and if they could more agreeably or profitably amuse themselves,

than by going to Church, how could they do better then follow so good a precedent, and desert it as their pastor had done. Hence the great and opulent farmers spent their Sunday mornings in the diversions of the field, and the rest of the day over the bottle. The little farmer passed his Sabbath at the ale-house. The labourers theirs at quoits and foot-ball.

Poor Yarnstockings was hurt at all this : he preached against such breach of duty ; but, alas ! his preachment was a mere wall-lecture. He privately admonished : but it is the common infirmity of human nature to estimate the value of advice, not by its intrinsic worth, but according to the worth, and wealth, and consequence of the person that gives it :—and who will suppose that the farmer, who eats roast beef and can drink his bottle of port, will pay much deference to the advice of a man, to whom a cup of ale is a luxury ? Such was exactly the case with Mr. Yarnstockings, and his parishioners ; who, whenever he began to prose, as they termed it, answered him with an oath, or the more facetious of them

with a piece of bawdry. Taught by those retorts his want of influence, he at length forbore his reproofs : and, when the purseproud farmer invited him to dinner, from the silence of reproof he proceeded to a simile of approbation at the hackneyed scraps of indecency ; and grew callous, even to the scurrilities he heard lavishly employed ; for it is a darling subject with the gentry of that class, against the clergy. I will not say that the curate altogether liked it ; but to bear with it, was the conditional purchase of a good dinner at Dovedale ; and a good dinner was an object to poor Yarnstockings, who had no other way to procure one than by accommodation. And, at length, neither oaths nor nonsense, such is the force of habit, gave the poor curate half so much uneasiness, as a schism shop that was opened in the parish by a methodist preacher ; who, taking advantage of the profligate state of it, had erected a conventicle there : and perseverance obtained him success. The parish of course became divided between atheists and enthusiasts ; and which hate the Established Church most, it is very difficult to tell

And now, gentle reader, in this miserable state of things, what measures was poor Yarnstockings to pursue? I really think he took the very best that could be adopted. He presented to Mr. Doublechin the state of his parish; and humbly craved his advice. The rector's answer is a beautiful specimen of clerical Laconicism, and of the easy seat on which a dignified ecclesiastic sits. Oh, 'tis a charming thing to go to heaven, lolling in some snug Chathedral on a crimson velvet cushion!

“ My good curate,

“ I am sorry for the account
 “ you give of my parish, and more for your
 “ uneasiness about it. For if the people will
 “ be——, they must be——, and neither
 “ you, nor I, can help it. But so long as they
 “ pay their tithes, and I your stipend, as
 “ regularly as we both do; there is some
 “ consolation to be derived from Dovedale
 “ both by you and me :

“ Your faithful rector,

“ DONNABY DOUBLECHIN.”

Might I on this occasion be permitted to add a word respecting pluralities ; I would observe, that the original intent of dispensations to hold more livings than one was the remuneration of extraordinary learning and merit. And accordingly there is a form of examination, I believe, even to this day, required of those who apply to the archbishops for such dispensations. But the examination required is of such a nature, that I can not say I ever heard of one single individual, that had learning and merit enough to obtain a passport into holy orders, who had not also enough of both to obtain a dispensation to hold as many livings, as he had learning and merit enough to procure. On this point however, I express myself with diffidence ; such rejections may have taken place, and I not have been acquainted with them. And I think the more diffidently ; such dispensing power being placed in the hands of two the most independent members of the Church. Yet I am sorry to say, I have the misfortune to know some pluralists not very conspicuous either for learning or merit. Nor do I conceive it possible for a man

possessed of a moderate share of either, to have laughed off, as Mr. Doublechin did, a complaint of so solemn a nature, and so seriously and properly urged. But the truth is, that, in spite of all the exertions of many excellent prelates, dissipation, ignorance, and illiterature are as likely to succeed in obtaining, I wish not better calculated to procure, *two* livings, than merit, learning, and study : and if a dispensation to hold them, be as easily obtained, as the presentations to them ; we must expect in high preferments to see many a Doublechin.

But to leave this opulent rector, and his humble curate, to their respective subjects of consolation, I cannot forbear observing in general, how wonderful it is, that this business of watching over the souls of his parishioners by proxy, does not sit more heavy on the conscience of a pampered pluralist, than it usually appears to do. Custom however, that makes all things easy, will account for this. And the customary practice of non-residence is much more prevalent, than the generality of my readers are aware. Of this an experiment,

which I made for the gratification of my own curiosity, will afford an extraordinary proof. I placed the fulchrum of my compass on a single spot, and drew a circle of ten miles round it; in which circumference I counted fifty non-resident rectors and vicars. This practice of discharging by proxy the most important duty of the most sacred trust, that can be to any man committed, seems peculiar to this country, in the extent in which it is here practised. I have not seen it in any Roman Catholic country; I have not seen it in any Calvinistical state. It appears to be a peculiar privilege of the Clergy of the Church of England; a privilege pregnant with enormous evils both to Religion and to the realm. I will not pretend to account for the great latitude, in which such indulgence is allowed: but it is certain, that many of our preferments are sold, or bartered away. The persons that so obtain the possession of them, regard them as their property, and not as a charge. Those, who sell or barter them away, consider them in the same light. And this interest or that interest, obtained with this or that great man, whether made

directly to him, or indirectly through another great man, procures such indulgence for one, two, or three. And the indulgence so granted becomes a precedent; of which four, five, and six avail themselves. And at last a general defiance is bidden to authority.

But the Bishop's eye, it hath been already observed, cannot be in every corner of an extensive diocese: which is very true, and suggests a subject of regret, that any part of our Ecclesiastical Establishment should have fallen into disuse, which is much the case with the rural Deans; whose office is very useful in communicating to the Bishop or his Archdeacon whatever may occur in his district, liable to censure, or worthy of commendation. They would be very useful too in another instance, in which Bishops, using all the circumspection which I am persuaded they do, are very liable to be imposed on. The case, to which I allude, is that of testimonials. A Bishop cannot be supposed to know the private character of every individual clergyman in his diocese: but, by directing his Arch-

deacon to write to the Dean of the district, he would always be made acquainted with it; and till the office of rural Deans be re-established, I would earnestly recommend the strict residence of the Archdeacons; which, if I be not much misinformed, is lamentably neglected.

And now, to return to my subject: from the false ease in which we left Mr. Doublechin, I will beg my reader's adverting to some non-residents of a different description; whose respective pleas I will just mention, and leave him to make his own reflections on them. And first Mr. Pomposo's fate has thrown him, it is true, into a very valuable living; but it is in a spot, where *nobody* lives: and, as he has been used to genteel society, he has taken a house in a vicinity where that is to be met with; from whence he rolls down to his Church once a month in his carriage, to take his surplice fees, and preach a frigid sermon.

Mr. Plod is somewhat nearer the mark of duty, than we observed Mr. Hubblebub

to be, or even than Mr. Giles. Yet Mr. Plod must be told, that a languid preaching once a week, *pro forma*, is the poorest part of a clergyman's parochial duty. He has got a very large farm with a very good house upon it, and near his own parish. There, while in his brown fustian, he, six days in the week, overlooks his dung cart and his threshers, he can in his own church gabble over a sermon on the seventh, and save the expense of a curate; with the further advantage of letting his parsonage house to the overseer, for the accommodation of the paupers.

The parsonage house on Mr. Whiffles's living, is too large for him; and he also finds, that he can indulge his whims in lodgings, in another parish, with greater liberty than he can with propriety do in his own. And he can do the occasional duty of his parish as well, living where he will; as he could have done, if he lived where he ought. His clerk has the cue, and always knows where to find him; and can ferret him out when wanted, to bear away funeral trophies, or to pocket

a licence fee. Jocund and gay, he spouts a sermon to his parishioners on the Sunday ; and hangs up his gown on a peg in the vestry till the Sunday following, when he repeats his hebdomadal task.

Mr. Careless observes, that, in living with his parishioners, he will be obliged to associate with them : and that he holds to be more than he bargained for, when he took the living. He, for, his own part thinks the clergyman and his parishioners agree best at a distance ; and therefore has taken a snug house at a little distance from them, and once a week mounts his pulpit for their edification.

But to all these non-resident gentry, I must repeat the burden of the page ; and tell them, that the first duty they owe their respective parishes is neglected ; that to associate occasionally with their parishioners, to call in upon them, to be at hand to relieve the wants of those who may have wants, to give advice to those who perhaps may need it, to spend in the parish the money they draw from it ; these are

duties of their high office, of their important charge, which will tend to conciliate their parishioners to them, and win their respect and regard : and, when once that point is gained, every thing their pastor recommends, his private advice, his public instruction, will be received with additional impresson by hearts warm with affectionate esteem for him, and assured of his interested zeal for their happiness, both in this world and the next. And I will further add, that a house too small, or a house too large, or no house at all, is no excuse, either in the forum of law or conscience, for non-residence. If the house be too small, or too large, a faculty is never refused, to contract or enlarge it. And if there be no house at all upon the living, the incumbent is compellable to build one. And now tell me, Reverend Sirs, is any of the pleas I have above alluded to a sufficient excuse for non-residence? Is a twopenny sermon, picked up from a pamphlet stall, ill applied to your congregation; gutted and garbled, to disguise it ; and read to your audience with as much *sang froid*, as you would read a newspaper, a discharge of the duty you

owe your parish, equal to those obligations I have just mentioned, and to a number of other little attentions which I forbear to enlarge on?

Since I am on the subject of sermons, I cannot but express my surprise, that the regular clergy do not cultivate the art of extempore preaching more than they seem inclined to do. Could they conceive the very different effect, that a sermon delivered *memoriter*, and thereby apparently at least from the heart, and a discourse read from their sermon book, has upon their audience; we should find extempore preaching much more common than it is. When I would establish a general truth, I like to illustrate it by a particular example. Go then, good reader, to a circle in Moorfields, and hear a change on half a dozen words rung extempore for an hour; and from thence pass to a Church, and attend even Dr. Duval, reading from his book the most elegant discourse, even that learned Doctor could compose, accompanied with all the fascinating charms of external eloquence, of which he is so complete a master; and

I will stake the truth of my observation on the different impression, made on the minds of their respective congregations, by Dr. Duval and a methodist preacher.

But however great an advocate I am for the residence of the clergy, there is one instance in which the breach of the duty is attended with fewer ill consequences, than the observance of it. I mean not the case of a profligate and immoral clergyman. In all professions, there are such characters; and, without a miracle, there must be such among the clergy. But it would be unfair from the abuse of character, to argue against the use it. I believe there to be fewer characters of this description among the clergy, than in any other profession whatever. Pity that there should be any! The instance to which I allude is, where the clergyman is so unhappy as to be at variance with his parishioners on the subject of tithes, which disputes are too frequent: but the fault, I am free to own, generally originates with the parishioners; since the improvements, that have of late years taken place in grazing and agriculture, the real

value of livings is beyond calculation ; and if the necessities of the clergyman oblige him to attend rather closely to those concerns, dissatisfactions on the part of the parishioners are sure to ensue. First, they and their pastor look cold on each other ; then they break off all intercourse ; and, from indifference and neglect, they proceed to insults and affronts. He shuns their private company : they shun his pastoral instructions. They thwart him ; he sets them at defiance. They finally resort to what they think the most marked flights they can put upon him ; and, (which is the most common way of expressing their contempt and dislike) they never enter the church. And thus the pastor, placed in the parish to feed the flock, becomes a

“ Two-handed engine at the door,”

to drive them from their pasturage. I wish this instance was a singular one ; but it is neither a singular nor uncommon one : it unfortunately occurs in different parts of every county in the kingdom.

Strange that the Legislature should not yet have removed so great a bone of con-

tention ! sure it cannot be impossible to hit upon a mode of commutation ; such as may subserve the great purposes of Religion, without injuring the temporalities of it. To convert the stipend of the clergy to a money payment, and vest their property in the funds, is the wickedest idea a profligate and unprincipled mind ever seriously conceived. A prelude to it was however, once brought forward, but justly scouted. The author of the project is every day sinking into contempt ; and it is unnecessary to warn my country against the designs of a single individual, more distinguished by low cunning than profound knowledge, by pliability to the bent of interest than solidity of judgment, more by pertness and plausibility, than sound reasoning and extensive information. But I leave the man, and resume the subject that introduced him.

A corn rent has been proposed, which was suggested by the custom of colleges. There is no harm in it: but that is not saying much in favour of the project. Indeed there is only one general mode of

commutation, that would effectually remove the evil complained of in the payment which at present subsists, and that is a removal of it from the tenant to the landlord. And the mode I would propose is simply this: Let every proprietor of land be enabled to purchase, and every incumbent obliged to sell his tithes; the price to be fixed by an uninterested jury, at the average price of land in the county: and every proprietor may be enabled to make such purchase by an Act of Parliament, which should give a preference to mortgages, for that purpose made, above all others. Then let the product of the monies so advanced be employed in the purchase of land to the required amount, or nearly to that amount, in whatever parish it might be met with; and the rent of that land, whether bought in one parcel or more, would form the value of the living. An objection, I am aware, might be made to this plan: and I know but one, which is, that would it throw too much land in mortmain. I see not myself the weight of the objection; but I know it would be esteemed one. I do not know that this mode of payment.

would be preferable to what tithes might be made: but it certainly is to the present manner of collecting them. The lately declared opinion of a very great man, whose opinion always claims respect, on the subject of tithes, was, "that the mode of payment established in them was so wise, respecting the purpose for which they were ordained, as to bear evident marks of God's own appointment." And with that great man I agree, that no mode of payment whatever has yet been conceived, so well calculated for the provision of an established priesthood, as that; yet experience shews us, that in the present state of things in this country, it has its disadvantages. If you can strip it of those disadvantages, by altering the mode of collecting them; is there a reason why it should not be done? I will propose what I conceive to be a possible means of effecting it; and will then proceed to consider the only objection that I think can be justly urged against it.

A clergyman is placed in charge of a parish, by his superintendence and instruction to contribute to the happiness of it,

both in this world and the next. Now to give force to his instructions, surely the first step is to conciliate the esteem of his parishioners. And will it most conduce to, or obstruct that purpose, to take from the poor the fruits of their industry, a tenth of their little property, of their potatoes, their apples, and their eggs : and from the rich, besides all these, the tenth of their pigs, their lambs, their corn ; in short, of every increase of their pasturage, of every production of their farm ? This, I fear, is generally found a very unsuccessful way of obtaining their affection and esteem. It may, and often does, rob them of both ; but cannot possibly tend to conciliate them. It is true that the landlord ultimately pays it : but it is equally true, that you cannot persuade the tenant that it is so. They feel it otherwise ; and some cannot, and some will not, reason about it.

But if the landlord do ultimately pay, and he knows he does ; why might not that ultimate payment be made by him to the clergyman, as well as to the tenant ? Why should not the decimal, the fair tenths

tenths of his property, be paid immediately by the land-owner ; and he be thereby enabled to let his land tithe-free ? There is nothing the landlord so much wishes ; there is no payment he would make more cheerfully. But what does the clergyman, by this exchange of payment, give up ? He gives up the claim of the tithe he possesses on labour and industry : he gives up much less than the modern improvements of grazing and agriculture have within the last thirty years added to his benefice : he makes a small sacrifice of property, in order to live in ease and quietness, happy in the love, the respect, the ready services of his parishioners. He lives amongst them, like the father of a family ; and they respect him as their friend and benefactor ; as their best benefactor, whose care and kindness attend them through this world, and extend to a better. And shall a few poor poultry guineas a year be placed in competition with benefits such as these ? It is a short and easy mode of payment ; it is not subject to those irregularities to which a corn payment is liable ; it will always keep its level with the value of property, as

well in the advance, as in the diminution of it; it is clear from all intricacies and embarrassments; a fee-farm rent, payable out of an ample property.

There is however, I will acknowledge, an objection behind, that has been supposed a very mighty one; which is, that it is liable to frauds. And so it is; but not more exposed to them, than the present mode of collecting the tithes. At present, the farmer can, and often does, lead off from the ground his hay and corn by night; and as frequently conceals his wool in his hay-loft, his granary, and cellars. How often are sheep driven, before sheering and lambing time, from titheable places to those that are tithe-free! These arts, and various others that are continually practised, and which not only occasion immediate injury to the clergyman, but also involve him in troublesome and expensive law-suits, will surely go far to remove the single objection of fraud in the value of the rents: and of such frauds, when discovered, a smart penalty, charged on the landlord only, and the tenant's evidence made admissible,

would be a powerful preventive. Greater apprehensions have been entertained of these collusions, than they deserve. What man of property, to say nothing of character, would lay himself open to the infamy of such a prosecution, for the sake of a little advance of rent ! Such frauds are surely much less likely to be committed, than those that I have observed are sometimes practised by low and needy farmers ; and which, when discovered, are attended with neither fine nor infamy : they at worst create a transient laugh among their fellow-parishioners, and at the same time win their approbation.

If a commutation for tithes, less injurious to the interests of the clergy, that promises more permanency, more free from difficulties, more conducive to the purposes of Religion, can be pointed out, let it be produced ; there cannot be a properer time for it. We are informed of the purposed inclosures of heaths, and wastes, and extensive fens. The claims of the clergy, on those occasions, will be numerous and various ; if the parishes contiguous to those

inclosures, or such as have an interest in them, are to be considered in their respective claims of tithes. If the lands inclosed are to be tithe-free; such exemption will form a ground for continual frauds in the titheable parishes adjacent, of a nature too well known to need specification. And I recommend it earnestly to country gentlemen, as well as to the clergy that may be concerned in them, to have the great concern of tithes settled, either by commutation, or a proper adjustment of respective claims, as little exposed as possible to fraudulent practices, before they give their consent to the measures, or advance a guinea towards the execution of them.

Besides heaths and fens, there is another kind of waste lands, which, because lying in little plats, have never been well considered, nor brought to their proper accounts: I mean derelict land, gained from the sea. It has been the custom of proprietors of lands fronting the seas, to claim the land which the sea may have relinquished opposite to their own, as their own property. Whereas I have no doubt

of it being the real property of the Crown; and likewise I conceive a property which is tithe-free. And if the Crown were to assert its right; and sell those lands tithe-free; in the large circumference of this island, it would produce an ample fund to the revenue, and be also a constant source of increasing wealth. For it is well known, that wherever the sea is beat off by mounds and banks; there she recedes, seeking a more open way to expand herself in some other quarter.

But to return from this digression to the original purport of these reflections, which was the consideration of the evils of non-residence, and the practice in which the opulent clergy indulge of watching over souls by proxy; I would earnestly recommend it to the Legislature to consider of some remedy to so great and increasing an evil. It is an object worthy of their interference, it is an evil in which good government is nearly concerned; it is a matter in which the interests of this world and the next are united. The respective Bishop certainly has it in his power to compel

a vicar to residence; to which on his institution he takes an oath, with the saving clause of "*nisi aliter dispensatum fuerit a Dio-cesano.*" If that dispensing clause were struck out of the oath, or some specific line drawn for the permissible exercise of the power which it vests in the Bishops; it would in part remove the evils complained of, and give residents to the vicarages: and their Lordships, I am persuaded, would very readily give up a power, which they often exercise reluctantly; indulging an amiable disposition to make things as easy as they can to their inferiors, though sometimes at the sacrifice of what may appear to them strictly and rigidly right. With rectors, it is otherwise: and if Bishops cannot compel them to residence, without a long, and troublesome, and expensive course of law; if fines and penalties, effectual to the purpose, cannot be levied; if marks of reprobation cannot be stamped on defaulters: some characters of distinction might perhaps be conferred on resident clergymen, that might add to residence respect, and thereby contribute to promote it. Suppose for instance, a resident cler-

gyman was to be *ex officio* a justice of the peace : I should conceive the commission would be as well filled, and the duties of it as well discharged, as by upstart and purse-proud farmers and graziers, always uneducated, generally ignorant, and illiterate in the extreme.

In the free investigation of the subject these pages offer, I ground the liberty I have taken on religious principles, on an earnest desire to promote that sacred cause ; which, according to his abilities and his sphere, I hold at all times, especially in such disastrous times as these, to be every Christian's duty. And having in the course of these reflections stepped a little aside, to point out to government what I conceive, with submission to superior opinions, to afford an increased source of revenue ; I hope I may without censure be permitted to recommend the re-establishment of a certain order of Ministers of Religion, which I have always thought to have been without sufficient consideration annihilated. And if the saving of 15, or 20,000*l.* a year can be an object : it may be easily made good out of the ample fund

I have above suggested. The abolition I allude to, is that of regimental chaplains.

Whether it was sanctioned by an Act of the Legislature, I pretend not to say : I should presume not, because I think there are, in both Houses of Parliament, characters, that would have entered their *caveat* against it. However useless these chaplains may have become, the fault lies intirely with the Colonels of the respective regiments. Their power of appointing them, and, after their appointment, of dispensing with residence, has been sadly abused ; and it is bad reasoning, from the abuse of a thing to argue against the use of it : yet, such I am afraid has been the mode of reasoning, that was in this instance adopted. I do not hold Colonels of regiments to be the proper guardians of religious institutions : I will, however, enter into no arguments on that article. The appointment of chaplains is now taken from them, and a compensation has been made to them for the loss of that *valuable* privilege : I think it may be better placed ; and in the loss of their dispensing power in religious concerns, their military consequence will, I conceive,

suffer no diminution : but leaving the Colonel under the chastisement of a satyrist of the last age,

“ Bright parcel gilt with forty dead men’s pay,”

I will proceed in brief to state my reasons for the re-establishment of the order of chaplains.

Reasoning from what they ought to be, and what they might be, they are not the useless appendages to an army profligacy and ignorance may have represented, or assumed them. If obliged to attend their duty, they would have it in their power to do much good. They would be a check on the prophaneness and ribaldry, that often disgrace the society of uneducated military men; and by their admonitions, might diffuse principles of Religion, where all must own they are sadly wanted. And I will venture to say, that he, who has been taught to fear God more than man, will not make the worse soldier on that account; that he, who hopes for happiness in the next world, will not be the more afraid to quit this. I could give some instances in support of this assertion, (for I am an old man, and an old soldier), in a set of men whom

I remember more than forty-years ago in our army in Flanders ; who, to the ridicule of many, would meet to sing hymns in a barn or a sawpit : and those fellows, I will add, were always amongst the first to court danger, and the last to quit their posts.

If the chaplain's duty was scandalously neglected, by the connivance of the Colonel in suffering it to be made a sinecure, in order to enhance the value of it ; and any worthless clergyman was suffered to be sent as deputy, and in that capacity to officiate for half a dozen regiments ; that evil might have been easily removed by a general order, that every chaplain should personally attend his regiment, or fell out, and resign to one who would. It would be a strange inference, to conclude, that, because a man neglects his duty in an office he may hold, therefore the office itself is of no consequence. At that rate, because an incumbent will not reside on his living, but leaves it to the care of a curate, who has perhaps, two or three more churches on his hands, we might argue against the use

of parish priests : or “ because a Bishop may not have confirmed in his diocese for those nine years past,” we might plead the inutility of the episcopal order.

Atheism, and its cousin-german Infidelity, will, I hope, excuse me, if, engaged as I am on the subject of Religion, I venture to hazard my opinion, that in abolishing the order of regimental chaplains, government trod rather too near the footsteps of our enlightened Gallican neighbours. The Roman poet imputed the evils of his distracted country to its impiety, in suffering the temples of their Gods, by their inattention to them, to moulder away : and those, who may be better acquainted with Horace than I am, will not I believe charge him with religious enthusiasm. May not I therefore, without incurring the charge, attribute in some degree to the too hasty act that deprived the army of its religious Ministers, the ill success of our late continental expeditions, which the British troops have experienced ? If the idea of divine visitations be anile and vain ; I stand corrected : thinking otherwise, I ask no

indulgence for the weakness of my remark.

I have this moment noticed a paragraph in the public prints; which says, "it is reported, that Lord Chatham will go Governor of Bengal to India, and that an Asiatic Bishop will accompany him." While we have two Bishops in so small a part of our foreign territories, as our present possessions in North America; it is somewhat extraordinary, that we should not have one in our extensive territories either in the East or West Indies. Are Bishops of no use? I think otherwise. Else there is a vast revenue very uselessly appropriated. I hope however, the rumour is not unfounded; and that our rulers, in those days of Atheism and Infidelity, will demonstrate their attention to the interests of Religion, and the security of the Established Church.

"Diis te minorem quod geris, imperas."